

## What's New in Hangaroa

### Supply Ship Fiasco

□ When we went to press with our June issue, the supply ship *Elisabeth Boye* was still chugging around and around the island, followed by the rescue ship *Tokarau*. This impromptu parade was due to the loss of the supply ship's anchors (*RNJ* 8 (2):48). Rapanuiphiles will be relieved to know that the seas

their purpose was to recuperate the ownership of land for the islanders. They also demanded a congressman and senator to represent them in Parliament. Governor Jacopo Hey noted that their petition had been sent to all government agencies.

The strikers' demands result from feelings that their ancestral rights are being violated and they are frustrated with studies, delays, more studies, and the failure of the government to complete its promises.

On 23 June, *El Mercurio de Valparaiso* reported that the sub-secretary of National Properties, Patricio Vergara, had been working with islanders to resolve the land problem but activities have been suspended due to the strike. The following day it was reported that the Senate's president, Gabriel Valdés, had requested that a commission be formed to go and study the island's land problem.

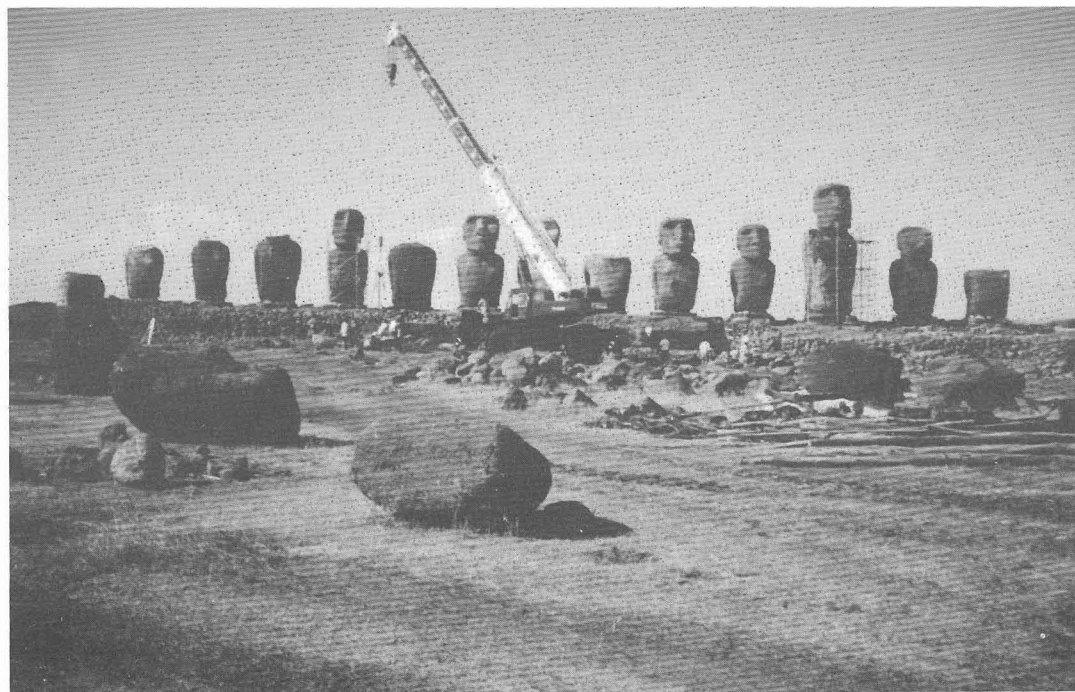
▢ Protests marches continued on the island in July. With permission of the governor, the *Consejo de Ancianos* organized two peaceful demonstrations. In the first demonstration, 140 islanders marched; the second had 65 participants. The protests are in regard to ownership of the land, use of the island territory, and lack of

attention to the problems of the Rapanui by government authorities. *El Mercurio* for 13 July reported that "During the marches, flags containing the symbol of a *reimiro*, which represents the principle of authority in Rapanui culture, were distributed among the population. After the marches, flags were raised in the front yards of many island homes."

□ **Tongariki.** Some questions have arisen regarding the alignment of the back sea wall at Ahu Tongariki which has, in its reconstruction, a grossly sinuous appearance. Hard for many archaeologists to believe it originally was constructed in that way.

Nonetheless, the restoration is nearing completion. Fourteen of Tongariki's 15 statues have been raised onto the rebuilt platform which measures 750 feet in length, including the wings. The statues weigh between 40 and 88 tons and measure between 18 and 27 feet in height. Some of these were crowned with topknots of red scoria which would have increased their heights. The tallest *moai* had been broken so the torso was set upright and then the head replaced with special cement.

Half of the statues were put up with mortar recommended



*The ahu at Tongariki as it appeared in early June of this year. In the foreground, one can see several of the heads and topknots (pukao) still to be placed on their respective torsos. Photo Credit: William Liller.*

calmed, the anchors were recovered, and the ship has returned to Valparaiso.

This has been quite a saga: when the cargo was loaded in Valparaiso, only 65% of it was put on board, the rest being left in storage. When the ship arrived to the island, no cargo was permitted to be unloaded for several days until all charges had been paid. Then, off-loading began in a storm, at the insistence of the captain; the result was that the landing barge and containers being carried ashore on it were lost when the barge capsized. The ship's anchors were lost when the *Elisabeth Boye* began to drift onto the rocks, necessitating the seemingly endless 'round-the-island trips until the storm abated and the anchors could be recovered. This used up an extraordinary amount of fuel.

The Bottom Line: the captain of the supply ship has been fired.

### Strike on Rapa Nui

▢ Some 200 islanders began an indefinite strike on 20 June. Initiated by the new *Consejo de Ancianos* (Juan Chávez, President) the strikers met in front of the church, stating that

by professional conservators; the other half were glued on with an epoxy provided by the Japanese. In addition, the statues were treated with a chemical compound to strengthen them and prevent further erosion.

El Mercurio de Valparaiso (July 23, 1994) announced that, in August of this year, Rapa Nui islanders will vote to elect a five-member "development committee" as is provided for in the new *Indigenous Law*. Approximately 800 ethnic Rapa Nui inhabitants will cast their votes. The Committee's purpose will be to represent members of the island culture.

A meeting in Santiago between the Intendente, Hardy Knittel, the Minister of Internal Affairs, German Correa, and representatives from the Ministries of Transport, Agriculture and Planning discussed a series of matters that relate to Easter Island. They agreed that any project concerning the island should be circulated through all the services or ministries of government in order to avoid a lack of coordination. Such a measure will avoid situations such as that which happened at the beginning of the year when a project approved by FOSIS [*Fondo de Solidaridad y Inversion Social*] to breed goats on the island was rejected by SAG [*Servicio Agrícola y Ganadero*] after the animals had already arrived to their destination.

Knittel stated that there is a need to increase transport subsidies to the island because two trips a year are insufficient for the current needs of islanders and the growing number of tourists. He added that there is a possibility that the Chilean Air Force could take two trips a year, in March and December, to carry students between the island and the continent.

□ New airlines to Rapa Nui? The 5th Region Development Committee (QRDC) has asked the Ministry of Transportation to agree to open Easter Island to Malaysian Airlines in order that tourism to the island can be increased. Malaysian Airlines previously has solicited for landing rights but were denied as there is no reciprocal agreement with either LAN Chile or Ladeco to fly to Australia.

## International News

### Paris

□ *Le Monde* for 22 June published an article on Rapa Nui--the island and the film, which opened in Paris this summer. Titled "Easter Island and the Colonists from Hollywood" it states that the film has aroused the indignation of some of the inhabitants who feel that their history and their culture have been distorted and misrepresented by the film: "At the beginning of the century, the English company Williamson and Balfour obtained the concession of Easter Island for sheep-raising; it was not the sheep who found themselves in enclosures, but the Easter Islanders whose homes were surrounded by barbed wire. The anecdote is a cruel one. Nevertheless, it sums up quite well the attitude of the

'invaders', whose presence the inhabitants have had to bear throughout their history."

In the opinion of Ida-Luz Hucke Atan, an Easter Islander delegated by UNESCO to research Maori and Rapa Nui heritage, Kevin Reynold's film, *Rapa-Nui*, confirms that its people still have everything to fear from the consequences of "invasions", however peaceful they may be.

The article describes conditions on the island, the strike by the Rapanui against the film company and the problem of shortages and high prices on the island that resulted from the film making.

As a delegate of UNESCO, Ms. Hucke Atan observed that the filming was allowed "...in sacred places where it is forbidden to enter except on foot and under certain conditions. Jeeps, bulldozers and cranes invaded these sites where usually you can't even go on horseback" and she added that islanders became "...acquainted with cocaine, previously unknown to them".

Ms Hucke Atan concludes by stating: "The pill is even more bitter for the islanders to swallow as they feel the film gives the history and culture of the people of Rapa Nui the same sort of treatment given to dinosaurs and prehistory by Steven Spielberg in *Jurassic Park*." And, "In making this film...the Americans have behaved with the Rapanui in the same way as their ancestors did with the Indians. This is extremely serious for us, because there are so few of us: we have to fight to protect a culture and a history which are already threatened with disappearance."

[Trans: M. Dominique Ballereau]

## California

□ They're baaaack! A new herd of *moai* have appeared in a field on the Central Coast, near Morro Bay. A bunch of styrofoam statues (heads, actually) weighing 500 pounds each have been erected for a TV commercial advertising the 1995 Buick Sunfire. These are truly ugly examples of *moai* faces--most resemble The Terminator.

## REVIEWS



Leopold, Peter and Ricardo Herrgott. 1994. *Rapa Nui--Die Osterinsel. Alltag und Mythos des Eentlegensten Eilands der Welt*. Löwen Edition, Laimgrubengrass 19/10, A-1060 Vienna, Austria.

260 pages, 35 color photographs, black and white illustrations, maps, paperback. In German. To obtain a copy of this book, contact Löwen Edition. Price is US \$35; prepaid money order.

*Die Osterinsel* contains detailed information about the geography and history of the island plus two sections: "The Myth" and "Everyday Life". Included is a chapter on the making of the movie *Rapa-Nui* and its impact on the island; and detailed tourist information.